



## **The Original Tour and Friends Celebrate A Record Breaking Year**

What's the first thing to do with you've broken some records?

Get out the champagne of course – and that's just what The Original Tour did this July in the heart of London's China Town.

The Original Tour's annual Summer Party always attracts the good, the fairly good, and even the visually challenged to rock the night away – and this year was no exception with even more party goers packing into The Exchange Bar in Gerrard Street.

And there were plenty of reasons to raise a glass or ten to the UK inbound market with the open top bus tour specialist celebrating a record year in 2007 and, on an even more positive note; a strong first quarter of 2008.

Said commercial director Colin Atkins: "We have got all our good friends in the trade to thank for our great result last year and for our good start to 2008. The message is that tourism to London can reap the benefits of the strong Euro and offer great value to visitors from Europe".

Cue for another toast, a few more great prizes to be given out, the chance to admire The Original Tour's new illustration by top commercial artist Peter Greenwood, and, perhaps unfortunately, a running slide show of pictures of party goers really enjoying themselves in previous years doing things they would probably prefer to forget.

At travel industry rates of consumption the party cost The Original Tour a few bob, but it was nothing to the £1.6 million the company spent in 2007 on new sightseeing buses. That was the third year in succession that the company brought in top of the range new buses, and the development programme continues in 2008 with technical upgrades to its head office and depot in Wandsworth. These moves saw the completion of a £5 million investment plan by The Original Tour over the last three years which led to the company becoming the first sightseeing operator to be awarded VisitBritain's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Standard (VAQAS).

Also proving a great success is the newly opened Original London Visitor Centre in Trafalgar Square where on-line bookers can pick up tickets, and everyone can buy discounted tickets to London attractions, theatres and activities, as well as coach tours out of London, trips to Paris and City

Sightseeing around the world. It is also the ideally placed departure point for The Original Tour's complete free walking tours.

And they're not stopping there! For The Original Tour's parent company, Arriva plc, has just made a major investment in the Spanish transport system with the £78.6 million purchase of the Madrid-based transport company Empresa de Blas y Cia S.L, one of the largest contractors to the local transport industry.

Founded in 1951 at the time of The Festival of Britain, The Original Tour is now the largest single sightseeing operation in the world. The hop-on hop-off service allows customers to board any of its tour routes at over 90 different stops. Services operate daily, with a commentary in English or a wide choice of languages. A free river cruise is included with every ticket and the Kids' Club provides an educational but fun alternative for 5-12 year olds. For more information you can visit their web site [www.theoriginaltour.com](http://www.theoriginaltour.com)

Ends.

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## PICTURE CAPTIONS

File: Org Tour 1

Cool-her Britannia kept the live sounds going – and guys were anything but cool...

File: Org Tour 2

Defying gravity here is Jaime Gaya, unless there's a string attached to Kajsa Berggen! Only their friends at Axis and Globe Travel will know.

File: Org Tour 3

The guys with the prizes are The Original Tour's Colin Atkins (left) and Bob Scowen (right) – and the girl who's surprised is Nozomi Fushimi from ANA Sales Europe.

File: Org Tour 4

Doing what the travel industry does best – having a great time. How Original!

File: Org Tour 5

A gathering of the party faithful as Richard Blake, Travel Agenda; Jo Wales, Cathy Matos Mexican Tours; Kelly Strong, Strong Recruitment; Jim Brown, European Travel Services; John Wales, Encore Tickets prove that alcohol has absolutely no effect on them at all. In any way.

Ends.